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PROJECT CHECO SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT

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Date: 8-15-06

PROJECT CHECO REPORT

OPERATION

BIRMINGHAM (u)

29 JUNE 1966

HQ PACAF
Tactical Evaluation Center

Prepared by: Mr. Kenneth Sams
Chief, SE Asia Team
Project CHECO

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OPERATION BIRMINGHAM

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FOREWORD

The question that has been raised in the following report on "Operation Birmingham" is not new. The honest differences of opinion that exist on the part of the ground commander and the air commander at the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC), concerning how much pre-planned air support should be provided, have occurred in past exercises and campaigns. In this particular operation, stated requirements exceeded the pre-planned sorties provided, except during the last several days of the operation. If BDA is to be used as a yardstick for effectiveness, the amount of the tactical air support provided was not justified by the tangible results. If, however, the fact that the 1st Infantry Division was able to move at will through the heart of a Viet Cong controlled area with relatively few casualties is considered, close air support provided may have been the deciding factor, regardless of BDA, or other tangible evidences of damage.

Accepted joint doctrine requires that the Senior Ground Force Commander establish requirements by priority for tactical air support within stated air capabilities. In the event of disagreement between the overall ground commander and the overall air commander, the joint commander should resolve the allocation of tactical air resources.

Because of the existing command structure in South Vietnam, the Air Force Component Commander must make the required decisions on the relative priorities for allocation of air support, except when specific direction is received from COMUSMACV. He must balance such requests for pre-planned air support against requirements for other in-country operations of equal or

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greater importance. From the study, it is clear that additional pre-planned sorties could, and would, have been provided if the initial Viet Cong resistance had been greater.

The allocation of pre-planned sorties, although less than requested, appear correct in terms of the overall results of the operation. Significantly, all immediate requests were supported. A comparison of the sortie allocations to Operation Birmingham, as compared to all South Vietnam Tactical Operations for the period is shown in Appendix A to this report.

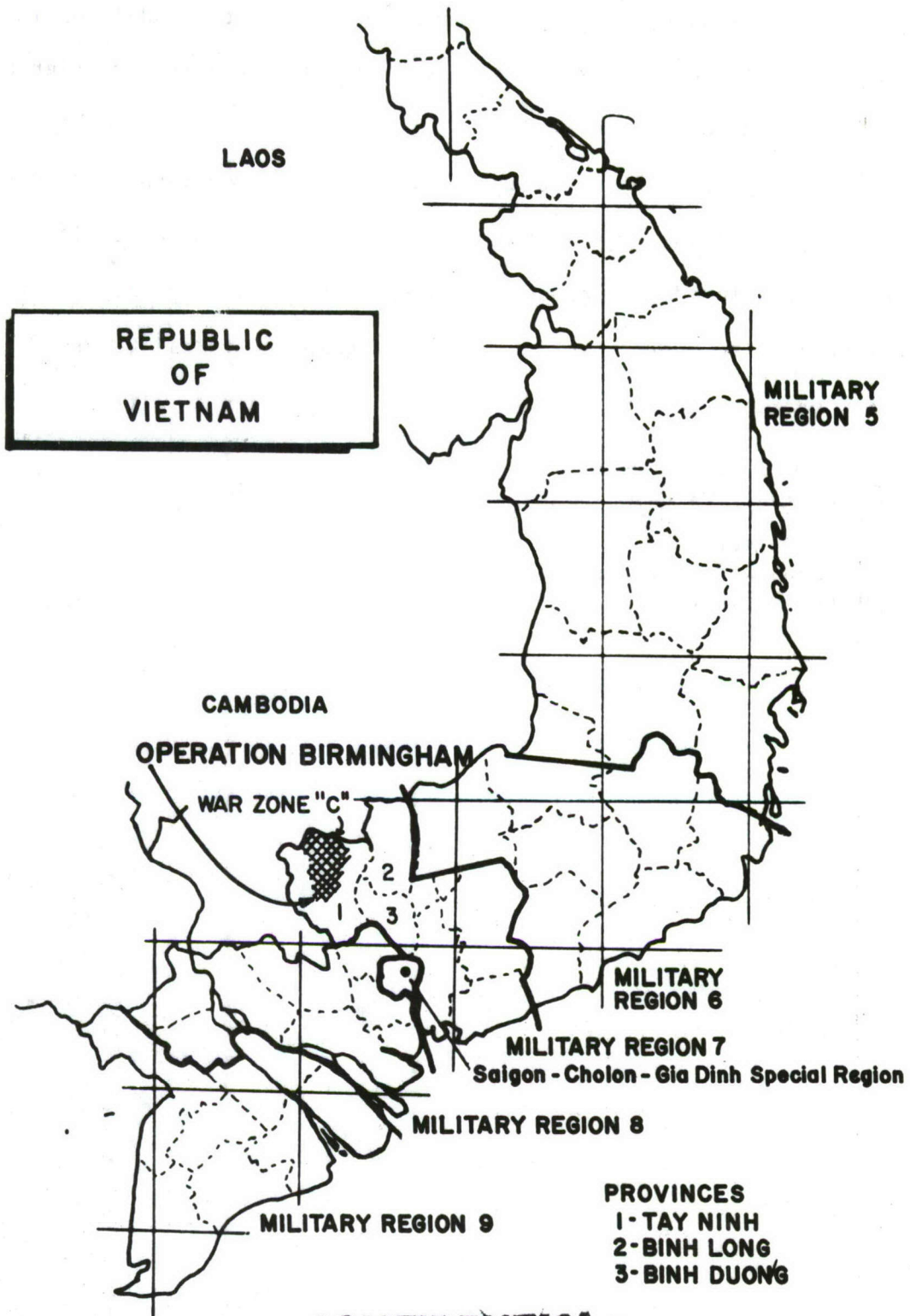
Edward C. Burtenshaw

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Tactical Evaluation

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OPERATION BIRMINGHAM

Operation Birmingham, a joint U. S. 1st Infantry Division/25th ARVN Division was a search and destroy operation initiated on 24 April 1966 against the heart of the Viet Cong organization in War Zone "C", Tay Ninh Province, only six miles from the Cambodian border. Before it terminated on 15 May, the operation was supported by 1280 tactical air strike sorties dropping 1040 tons of bombs. An additional 2583 tons of high explosive bombs and 224 tons of CBU munitions were dropped by B-52 bombers on twelve strike missions. This was the greatest commitment to-date of airpower in support of a ground operation in the Vietnam war. Yet, when the operation terminated, only five enemy troops were confirmed as killed by air strikes with another 155 possibly killed by air. The average 55.7 sorties a day flown in support of Birmingham was more than double the 26.3 sorties flown daily in support of Operation Masher, a 1st Air Cavalry Division operation conducted on 25 January--5 February, in which 605 enemy troops were confirmed killed by air. In Operation Masher, there was an average of .38 confirmed KBA per sortie compared to .004 KBA/per sortie in Birmingham. Significantly, more sorties were flown in support of Birmingham than were flown in the combined White Wing/Masher operation in January and February which resulted in 1250 confirmed KIA and 1300 estimated KIA. Despite the large number of sorties flown in support of Operation Birmingham, an additional 414, pre-planned sorties were requested, but turned down by the 7th Air Force.

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Operation Birmingham re-emphasized the question of how much air support is required and can reasonably be provided to a ground operation. The commander of the 1st Infantry Division, Major General William E. Dupuy, indicated shortly after the operation began that he was not being provided sufficient tactical air support. This was done on 28 April, the day after the 1st Division had requested 284 sorties for its six battalions in the field, or an average of 47 sorties per battalion per day. If all the strikes requested on 27 April had been provided, it would have used 63% of the total sorties flown that day throughout South Vietnam. The Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) provided only 68 sorties that day, or 15.2% of the total Vietnam sorties. However, on 29 April 110 sorties were provided, or 28.4% of total flown in South Vietnam. On the 1st of May, 120 sorties were flown out of 137 requested.

The plan for Birmingham called for an estimated 70 pre-planned fighter sorties to be available on D-Day and D plus one with an estimated 45 pre-planned strikes on hand for the remainder of the operation. Five USAF flights were to be on 15 minute ground alert throughout the operation. Initial priority of air support would go to neutralization of enemy forces and obstacles on, and in, the proximity of the landing zones. On completion of this phase, air support would be applied against destruction of Viet Cong reinforcement and supply routes, suspected Viet Cong concentrations and Viet Cong storage areas. First priority for close support was against enemy forces in contact with friendly units and known enemy locations. Second priority went to interdiction of Viet Cong routes of reinforcement, withdrawal and supply. Third priority went to suspected Viet Cong concentrations

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and base camps. Fourth priority was given to known and suspected storage areas. 1/

In addition to tactical air, the operation was supported by the 1st and 11th ARMY Aviation Battalions, employing 56 UH-1Ds and 12 CH-47s for airmobile operations. One airmobile company was to fly in direct support of each committed brigade with five UH-1D gunships from each airmobile company supporting committed brigades, for a ready reaction force. Artillery support was also planned for preparation of helicopter landing zones, interdiction of areas away from the LZs during heliborne operations, and interdiction of enemy routes of approach and withdrawal, base camps and installations. The plan also called for a psychological operations program involving use of C-47s and U-10s in support of Psyops teams. The use of riot control agents were planned for including grenades for use by ground units at squad level, and air delivered chemical munitions in situations where the advantage could be rapidly exploited by ground forces, superior firepower or air strikes. 2/

The operation was conducted in Zone "C", the heavily forested northwest corner of Tay Ninh Province. The area is low flat land with gentle slopes and with the exception of Nui Ba Den Mountain, all elevations are less than 100 meters and most less than 50 meters. The terrain would be extremely difficult to operate over when wet. Consequently, the operation was scheduled to terminate in mid-May, the beginning of the rainy season. Landing zones, particularly, would be flooded. Part of the area consisted of rubber plantations which provide excellent cover for enemy troops. Approximately 10,000

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people live in enemy controlled areas in Tay Ninh with the bulk in War Zone "C". These people were expected to oppose friendly operations.

The enemy had made good use of War Zone "C", which was adjacent to the safe haven of Cambodia. In this area, he had a high degree of self-sufficiency, drawing from the people the manpower, intelligence, subsistence, supplies, finances, and most other materials required to support his actions. The Zone "C" area was the location of the COSVN (Central Office, South Vietnam). It was a Cambodian egress point for men and material infiltrated from North Vietnam through the Laotian trail network, and contained a training assembly point.

The 271 and 273 Viet Cong Regiments were located in Zone "C" and the enemy was capable of attacking anywhere in Zone "C" with up to four main force battalions supported by local forces. In three days, this force could be reinforced with two main force regiments and two main force battalions. The Viet Cong was capable of ambushing friendly forces in strength, as he did in November 1965 at the Michelin Rubber Plantation adjacent to Zone "C" when heavy casualties were inflicted on U. S. forces. In the face of an attack by a multi-brigade unit, employing air and artillery, it was expected that the enemy would retreat to Cambodia, losing valuable equipment and supplies, but avoiding sacrifice of large forces. However, based on past experience, it was felt that the enemy would be ready to attack lightly defended positions or areas that would allow him to mass an overwhelming force. Operation Birmingham was scheduled to end around the time the Viet Cong were expected to begin their "monsoon offensive," so any vulnerable target could bring on a large enemy attack.

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In order to deceive the Viet Cong, a false operations order was published directing a two brigade operation which would focus attention on eastern Tay Ninh Province and divert attention from the initial areas of operation in western Tay Ninh Province. This false order was fully coordinated with the ARVN III Corps and air support was requested from the III Corps DASC. Increased reconnaissance was to be conducted in the deception plan area, which reconnaissance in the actual area of operation was kept to the absolute minimum. The details of the Frag Order for the deception plan were to be discussed freely with ARVN liaison officers, Hq II Field Force, Vietnam, was to introduce the deception plan into ARVN channels.

The predicted course of enemy action during Operation Birmingham turned out to be fairly accurate. The enemy made no major confrontation with the allied forces, and contact after the first week was minimal. Losing vast amounts of supplies in the process, the Viet Cong moved out of the operational area into Cambodia and elsewhere. However, perhaps as a pointed reminder that he was still effective, he placed accurate mortar fire on the Tay Ninh airstrip as the 1st Infantry Division was preparing to return to home base shortly before the operation terminated on 17 May.

Within a few weeks of the termination date of Birmingham, regimental sized elements of the Viet Cong were reported moving back toward the operational area.

Operation Birmingham revealed one of the major problems facing American units in operations against communist forces. A massive and expensive effort involving almost a full division was unable to make major contact

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WU XU
WT XT

CAMBODIA

CAMBODIA

WAR
ZONE
"C"

○ INITIAL
HELIBORNE
LANDINGS

RVN

PHASE I
OPERATION BIRMINGHAM

● TAY NINH CITY

0 STATUTE 5 MILES 10

SCALE 1:250,000

87 C-130 LANDINGS
2 C-123 24-26 APR

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with an enemy force primarily because that enemy did not choose to engage his opponent. Although large amounts of enemy stores, facilities, and equipment were destroyed, the operation cannot be described as a truly successful one. Except for size, Birmingham was not much different from hundreds of ARVN search and destroy operations of previous years which almost invariably did not make contact with the enemy, except on the enemy's initiative. Despite a deception plan widely circulated among ARVN forces to throw off the Viet Cong, the enemy apparently was aware of the actual plan. The Viet Cong in Tay Ninh controlled the majority of the people and thereby had an extremely efficient intelligence source as well as a supply source.

Without the massive employment of air on enemy locations, the 1st Division would have had difficulty in penetrating this enemy preserve and it would most certainly have suffered far heavier casualties than it did. This was recognized by the Division commander who wired Lt General Joseph H. Moore, 7th Air Force commander. ^{3/}

...The rapid advance of the infantry, and its success in achieving its objectives with light casualties is in large measure directly related to the heavy, responsive and accurate close air support furnished by your command....

In Phase I of the operation, seven battalions of the 1st Division were moved into the operation area. The 3rd Brigade began on 24 April (D-Day) with an infantry battalion and an artillery battery moving by helicopter into the AO (area of operations) to secure a landing zone for the remainder of the Brigade. On the morning of D-Day, a fixed wing shuttle of C-130s moved the remainder of the 3rd Brigade, the 1st Brigade and two infantry battalions from the 2nd Brigade. After closing at Tay

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| | |
|----|----|
| WU | XU |
| WT | XT |

CAMBODIA

CAMBODIA

30 APR

27 APR

28 APR

1st BRIGADE
3rd BRIGADE
2 BNS, 2nd BRIGADE
1st INF DIV

1,3,7 BNS
of 25th ARVN ABN DIV
Beginning 26 MAY

● TAY NINH CITY

9 MAY

SUSPECTED
VC HDQ.

RVN

**PHASE II, Beginning 26 MAY RVN
● TAY NINH CITY
III, & IV, OPERATION BIRMINGHAM**

A horizontal number line is shown with the word "STATUTE" above the line and "MILES" above the line. There are tick marks at 0, 5, and 10.

CONFIDENTIAL SCALE 1:250,000

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60

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Ninh III airfield, the force moved by ground and helicopter to the AO where a division base area was established. There was light contact during the first two days of the operation as U. S. forces were being moved into the AO.

B-52s struck the objective areas on 24 and 26 April, with fifteen aircraft on each mission dropping 315 tons on each day. On D-Day, 15 immediate and 45 pre-planned sorties were flown in support in the vicinity of XT 200 550 with no BDA reported due to smoke and foliage. Following the B-52 strikes of the objective area on the 24th, heliborne landings were made to the south and southwest of the first strike (near XT 036619) and to the southwest of the second strike (near XT 015 677). The units south of the first strike swept northward through the target area, and those landed southwest of the second strike pushed northwest toward the Cambodian border. The latter units were engaged by the enemy as they moved toward the target area. The following day, another four immediate and 42 pre-planned strikes were flown. There were three friendly-initiated light contacts on the 24th, one of which was supported by F-100s. Four contacts were made on 25 April, all light, and all friendly initiated. A C-47 flew flare support on the night of 24 April and an AC-47 flew on the night of the 25th, firing 5200 rounds of ammo.

Phase II involved two brigades conducting search and destroy operations in their assigned areas of operation. This began prior to the completion of Phase I and because of the unknown strength of the enemy, operations were initially in battalion size formations. The AOs contained major Viet Cong

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base camp complexes defended by caretaker forces and these were to be located and destroyed. Phase II ran from 24 April to 30 April. ^{4/}

After the light contact of the first three days, significant contact was made on 27 April. This occurred in the vicinity of WT 961 677 where a considerable amount of enemy supplies were located. In this engagement, one friendly was killed and 24 wounded while enemy losses were seven killed. The 1st Division captured 326 tons of rice, 25 tons of salt, 6800 uniforms and 16 boats which were destroyed. On the 27th, eight friendly-initiated contacts were made with the enemy. ^{5/}

Upon this first major contact with the enemy, the command element of the 1st Division requested 267 pre-planned sorties. Only 51 pre-planned were provided along with 17 immediate request sorties. The strikes on the 27th were rather productive. In one strike by 12 F-100s at WT 970 750, five secondary explosions were caused, believed to be ammunition or POL. Another strike by three F-100s and three F-5s at WT 992 624 produced three secondary explosions, probably ammo. Both these strikes were practically on the Cambodian border where the Song Za Mat River divided Vietnam and Cambodia, about 18 nautical miles northwest of Tay Ninh city. ^{6/}

Contact was established again on the morning of 28 April resulting in several U. S. personnel being killed and wounded. The 1/28 Battalion on this date located several huts with training aids, firing tables, a mockup of a UH-1 helicopter, 400 pounds of dried fish and 26 tons of rice in the vicinity of WT 968 679. ^{7/}

On 28 April, 111 pre-planned sorties were requested of which 102 were provided. Eight immediate sorties were also flown. A total of 85 tons

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of ordnance was dropped, the record for the operation to date and represented 41.8% of all the ordnance dropped in South Vietnam that day by USAF and VNAF tactical aircraft. ^{8/} By the end of 28 April, friendly losses were 16 KIA and 81 WIA while enemy forces lost 22 KIA.

On 29 April, six contacts were made with the enemy, with several friendly and enemy killed and more enemy facilities uncovered, including a Viet Cong hospital, lab, and medical supplies. The 1st Division requested 96 pre-planned and 22 immediates. The Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) provided 71 pre-planned and 22 immediate sorties, which dropped 60 tons of bombs. An Army L-19 crashed on 29 April, with its two-man crew killed. ^{9/}

On 30 April, heavy contact was again established with enemy groups, with eight contacts being reported, four of which received close air support from USAF F-100s. Unlike all previous contacts, six of those made on the 30th were enemy-initiated and only two by friendly forces. The 1/2 Infantry and 2/16 Infantry Battalions, advancing north along the Cai Bac River received heavy small arms fire from sniper in Lo Go Village (WT 9775) and a greater volume of automatic weapons fire from the Cambodian side of the river. As part of the 2/16 Battalion assaulted the village uncovering a company size base camp, the 1/2, 2/16 supporting artillery fired from the east side of the Cai Bac River on the enemy emplacements in Cambodia. The enemy fire was silenced. Artillery, air, and helicopter gunships supported the battalions during this contact. Friendly losses during this contact were six KIA, and nine WIA while the enemy lost 54 killed (body count) with six small arms captured. ^{10/}

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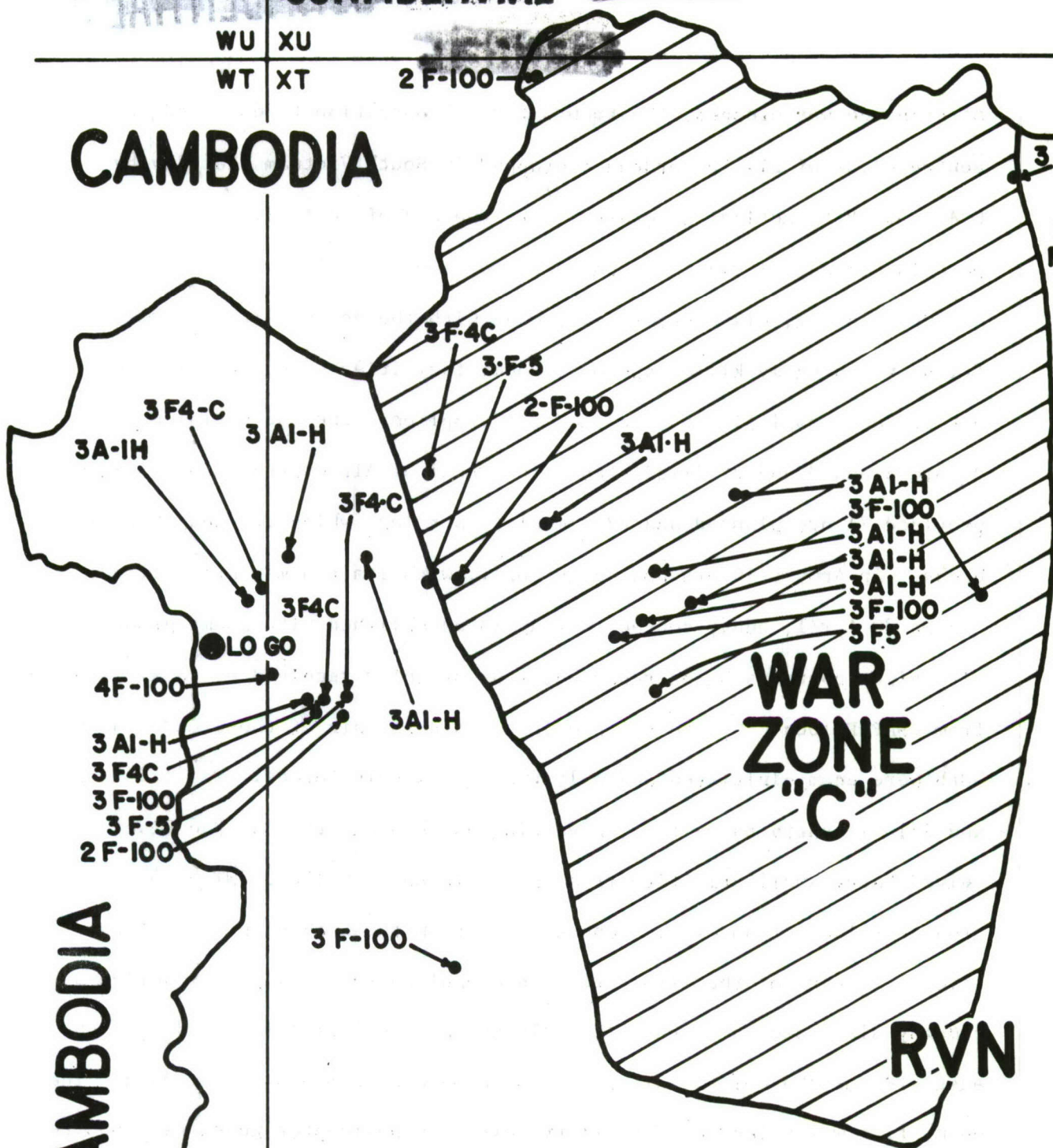
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WU XU

WT XT

2 F-100

CAMBODIA



CAMBODIA

● TAY NINH CITY

TACTICAL AIR STRIKES

2 MAY '66-72 PREPLANNED-6 IMMEDIATE

0 STATUTE 5 MILES 10

SCALE 1:250,000

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In the action on the 30th, the 1st Division had requested 96 pre-planned sorties and 19 immediates. 77 pre-planned and 20 immediate sorties were flown, with 86 tons of bombs dropped. During the night of the 30th, a C-47 flew flare support, dropping 64 flares and two F-100s expended in night support. 11/

Phase II of Operation Birmingham was completed on 30 April. Phase III, and IV, which followed, involved a continuing operation to find and destroy Viet Cong forces in assigned AOs. The 25th ARVN Division entered the action to search north of Tay Ninh City in AO Cadillac. In Phase IV, the objective was to locate a major Viet Cong headquarters and base camp reported located in the vicinity of XT 3181. Because of the unknown strength and location of Viet Cong forces in this area, brigades were directed to operate in 12/ battalion size formations.

Starting on 1 May, B-52 missions were flown daily through 10 May, using 12 to 15 aircraft of each mission. A record 118 pre-planned and 2 immediate tactical air strikes were flown on the 1st of May, but this was still short of the 135 requested pre-planned strikes. With the B-52s dropping 252 to 315 tons of ordnance daily, and with the reduction of enemy contacts, tactical sorties began dropping until on 13 May, the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) actually provided more pre-planned sorties than were requested, with 21 flown against 18 requested.

Tactical air was very active on 2 May when 72 pre-planned and six immediate sorties were flown in support of the 1st and 3rd Brigades with impressive results. In the heaviest fighting of the operation, F4Cs, F5s, F-100s, and Als, flew against enemy automatic weapons positions, sources of small arms fire, Viet Cong in the open, and enemy installations. Air and

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artillery were called in when a company ran into heavy fire from a large Viet Cong force near the village of Lo Go. In the ensuing battle, 42 Viet Cong were killed (body count) with another 100 estimated as killed. Pilots reported four secondary explosions, 54 trenches opened, and some 150 structures destroyed. The 71 tons dropped by tactical fighters on 2 May amounted to 52.5% of the total tonnage dropped by USAF and VNAF tactical fighters throughout South Vietnam that day. ^{13/}

Contact continued light until 1600 hours on 9 May when a maneuver battalion made contact with an estimated Viet Cong battalion at XT 380 855. After averaging only two or three immediates daily for the previous week, the action on the 9th called for 12 immediate strikes in addition to 27 pre-planned sorties. Sixteen sorties were placed on the enemy battalion, resulting in a possible 150 KIA, although these were not confirmed. This was perhaps the most impressive air action of the operation. Significantly, on the 9th, the 1st Division had requested the lowest number of pre-planned sorties for the operation to-date, only 27 being asked for compared to an average of 87 daily for the period 24 April--8 May. Also on 9 May, twelve B-52s dropped CBU munitions for the first time in support of the 1st Infantry Division.

For the remainder of the operation, there was only light contact with enemy forces and tactical air sorties averaged only about 30 a day. However, on 12 May, strike planes inadvertently dropped ordnance on 1st Division troops, killing two and wounding 58 U. S. soldiers. The 2/28 Infantry was conducting an air assault into a Landing Zone (LZ) at XT 632 458 when the air observer spotted 30-50 Viet Cong some 400 meters away from the landing zone.

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The FAC marked the enemy position with violet smoke and called in an air strike. Concurrently around 1058 hours, someone on the landing zone threw a violet smoke grenade and the fighter aircraft made a CBU run on this smoke in the landing zone, causing the casualties. The 1st Infantry Division took full responsibility for this incident. ^{14/}

Results of Operation Birmingham

When Operation Birmingham terminated on 17 May, a total of 1280 tactical sorties had been flown in support, dropping 1040 tons of bombs or 28.2% of the total 3695 tons dropped throughout South Vietnam by tactical air during the period of operation. In addition, 162 B-52s flying in support dropped 3118 tons of iron bombs and CBU. This was the heaviest air support ever provided a single ground operation of this duration. Yet, in terms of enemy casualties, the results were disappointing. The Viet Cong lost 119 confirmed KIA/KBA, 28 captured, and 28 suspects detained. There were only 5 Viet Cong confirmed killed by air. Friendly losses were 56 KIA and 324 WIA. ^{15/} A large amount of enemy stores and facilities were captured or destroyed. The following items were captured: ^{16/}

- 131 individual weapons
- 5009 rounds of ammunition
- 361 grenades
- 1115 mines and traps
- 250 blocks of TNT
- 18 rounds 60 mm mortar ammo
- 2 rounds 82 mm mortar ammo
- 985 sheets of tin
- 1 generator
- 1000 kilos of drugs
- 6 tons of fertilizers
- 48 bags of cement
- 163 boats
- 6 motorized boats

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WU XU
WT XT

CAMBODIA

CAMBODIA

SECRET

9 MAY

4 MAY
8 MAY

10 MAY

7 MAY

1 MAY

3 MAY
2 MAY

5 MAY
6 MAY

26 APR

24 APR

WAR
ZONE
"C"

SOUTH
VIETNAM

B-52 STRIKES
IN SUPPORT
OF OPERATION BIRMINGHAM

● TAY NINH CITY

0 STATUTE 5 MILES 10

SCALE 1:250,000

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2103 tons of rice
328 tons of salt
30 tons of wheat flour
1240 gallons of cooking oil
7050 Viet Cong uniforms
1200 sandals
1850 blue shirts
1800 black shorts
2500 other suits
3300 gallons of gas
1382 gallons of oil
2520 gallons of kerosene

In addition to this captured material, the 1st Infantry destroyed 66 enemy bases, four workshops, six first aid stations, three dispensaries, 68 supply depots, six gas storage areas, 814 guard huts, 182 structures, ^{17/} four bunkers and one sampan.

Air strikes were credited with destroying 207 structures, one sampan, and causing 17 secondary explosions. The number of structures destroyed was only 3½% of the total destroyed throughout Vietnam while the secondary explosions created by Birmingham air strikes represented only 8% of the total throughout the country.

B-52 Support

Twelve B-52 strikes were flown in support of Birmingham and another was flown the day before D-Day. In the twelve strikes flown during the operation, 162 sorties were employed dropping 3118 tons of ordnance, including 220 tons of CBU ordnance.

Zone "C" had been a B-52 target prior to the operation with impressive results reported. The average monthly rate of Viet Cong returnees from this area in 1965 was 39.5. In January 1966, following several B-52 strikes, it rose to 49 and the following month, it was 115. This significant increase was attributed by MACV to the B-52 bombing and the psywar program. ^{18/} A

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document captured in the Hq MR-7 area by the 1st Division during Operation Silver City II on 14 March 66 said there was some evidence of Viet Cong reluctance to perform missions for fear of B-52 strikes. ^{19/}

The request for B-52 strikes for Birmingham support was submitted on 22 April by COMUSMACV. He requested four strikes initially, two on the 24th, and one on the 26th. Fifteen aircraft were used, with each days mission dropping 315 tons of bombs. After the two strikes on the 24th, heliborne landings were made to the south and southwest of Low Stoop II, (near XT 015 677). The units south of Low Stoop I swept northward through the target area and those landed southwest of the strike moved northwest toward the Cambodian border.

The ten B-52 strikes conducted daily between 30 April and 9 May were in areas where ARDF fixes, photo readout, IR returns and prisoner and defector intelligence had indicated considerable enemy activity. The main Viet Cong headquarters, the COSVN (Central Office, South Vietnam) was in the area and the strikes were intended not only to smash enemy installations but to destroy major elements of the COSVN before they could escape. ^{20/}

This was the heaviest B-52 support provided to a ground operation in SVN and although there was not full ground exploitation, the strikes did make the job of entering the operational area easier of the 1st Infantry Division forces.

Operation An Dan 79/66

In a parallel operation to Birmingham, the 1st, 3rd, and 7th Airborne Battalions of the ARVN Airborne Division swept the area north of Tay Ninh

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between 26 April and 10 May. This operation made very little contact with the enemy. Only two Viet Cong were KIA and two logistical and camp complexes destroyed. Friendly losses were one KIA and three WIA. The ARVN units were supported by 145 strike sorties. ^{21/}

Airlift Support

Elements of the U. S. 1st Infantry Division were airlifted into Tay Ninh III from Bien Hoa, Phouc Vinh, Lai Khe and Phu Loi (Thu Dau Mot). During the initial move on 24 and 25 April, 87 C-130 and two C-123 loads were used to move 2,242 troops and 817 tons of combat equipment, rolling stock and supplies. The resupply phase began on 26 April and continued through 30 April with an additional 1,701 troops from Bien Hoa, POL from Tan Son Nhut and ammo and rations from Cam Ranh Bay moved to the operational area. The resupply of POL, ammo, and rations amounted to 2,147 tons. This tonnage was moved with 133 C-130 and 56 C-123 loads. Redeployment from the Tay Ninh area was carried out on 17 May 1966 and consisted of 16 C-130 sorties carrying 194 tons of cargo and 66 passengers.

Conclusion

It is extremely difficult to assess the results of an operation such as Birmingham. In terms of enemy contacts and enemy killed, it would appear that such a massive effort as that launched by the 1st Infantry Division was not productive. However, this conclusion would have to be weighed against the fact that U. S. forces were able to move about freely in a previously safe enemy sanctuary, where numerous supplies and facilities were captured and destroyed.

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Birmingham did raise the question of how much pre-planned tactical air support could reasonably be provided one ground operation. The tactical air control system, geared to support the tactical operations throughout South Vietnam, had to make the decision on filling such pre-planned requests. Its decision not to fill all those initially asked for in Birmingham was based on other indicated requirements. If pre-planned air support were provided to the degree requested, there is little question in the minds of 7th Air Force people that tactical air support operations elsewhere in Vietnam would suffer. While the TACS could not always be in a position to determine the priority of the various operations taking place at any one time, neither can one particular ground force commander make such a determination as to the priority of his specific operation. A reasonable compromise was worked out in Birmingham to the eventual satisfaction of the 1st Division commander, who praised the air support he received. It is significant that in Birmingham, every immediate air request was promptly filled and had an emergency situation arisen where large amounts of air support were required, it would have been provided.

The 1st Infantry Division commander, despite the question of numbers of sorties provided, was grateful for the support received. Referring to the major engagement of the operation, he said: ^{22/}

...It is evident that the Viet Cong screening force that conducted the delaying action north of Lo Go was overwhelmed by the weight of the air and artillery assault. Had it not been for the outstanding support furnished by your commander, our penetration of the Lo Go Secret Zone would have been slow and our casualties would have been high....

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Appendix A

MEMO: Air Support for Operation Birmingham

TACC-DD

1. Operation Birmingham, a joint 1st U.S. Infantry Division, 25th ARVN operation in Tay Ninh Province began 24/0700 Apr 66 and officially terminated 15/1400 May 66. On 16 April, 18 USAF and VNAF sorties flew air cover for withdrawal convoys. Only 12 VNAF sorties expended.

2. A total of 1694 sorties were requested in support of the 23 day operation, while 1280 were provided. A total of 1040 tons of ordnance were expended. Results of this expenditure were 5 KBA confirmed, 155 KBA estimated; 207 structures destroyed, one sampan destroyed and 17 secondary explosions.

K. P. HEARN, Captain, USAF
Combat Reports Officer
Tactical Air Control Center

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DAILY AVERAGES OF ALL SORTIES

| | <u>WHITE WING MASHER</u> | <u>BIRMINGHAM</u> |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| DAILY REQUESTED | 17.2 | 73.7 |
| DAILY FLOWN | 29.3 | 55.7 |

* TOTAL OF 1250 KIA IN WHITE WING/MASHER WITH 1300 ESTIMATED KIA. THIS COMPARES WITH 105 KIA IN OPN BIRMINGHAM.

SOURCE: COMBAT OPS LOGS

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COMPARISON, BIRMINGHAM AND SILVER CITY

| | <u>SORTIES PER DAY</u> | <u>SORTIES BN/DAY</u> |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| BIRMINGHAM | 55.7 | 5.7 |
| SILVER CITY | 24.5 | 4.1 |

1ST INF DIV - 7-23 MARCH 66. (6 BNS)

BIRMINGHAM - 24 APR THRU 28 APR (6 BN 1ST INF)

29 APR THRU 15 MAY - 13 BN (6BN 1ST INF, 6 BN ARVN)

TOTAL OF 228 BN DAYS

SOURCE: CHECO FOR SILVER CITY DATA
COMBAT OPS LOGS FOR SORTIES
TASE FOR BN'S.

COMPARISON WITH
OPERATION MASHER*

| | AVERAGE DAILY SORTIES FLOWN | CONFIRMED KBA PER SORTIES |
|------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| MASHER | 26.3 | .38 |
| BIRMINGHAM | 55.7 | .004 |

TOTAL KBA OPERATION MASHER (12 DAYS): 605

TOTAL KBA OPERATION BIRMINGHAM (22 DAYS): 5 (PLUS 150 POSSIBLE KBA ON 9 MAY)
(EST 5 KBA ON 13 MAY)

* 1ST AIR CAV OPS 25 JAN - 5 FEB.

STRIKE SORTIES

| | <u>SORTIES REQUESTED</u> | <u>SORTIES FLOWN</u> | <u>ALL VIETNAM SORTIES FLOWN</u> | <u>% OF BGM TO TOTAL FLOWN</u> |
|--------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 24 Apr | 105 | 60 | 374 | 16.0% |
| 25 Apr | 46 | 46 | 380 | 12.1% |
| 26 Apr | 92 | 56 | 388 | 14.4% |
| 27 Apr | 284 | 68 | 447 | 15.2% |
| 28 Apr | 119 | 110 | 386 | 28.4% |
| 29 Apr | 118 | 93 | 440 | 21.1% |
| 30 Apr | 115 | 97 | 413 | 23.5% |
| 1 May | 137 | 120 | 374 | 32.1% |
| 2 May | 93 | 78 | 374 | 20.8% |
| 3 May | 57 | 57 | 388 | 14.5% |
| 4 May | 38 | 34 | 372 | 9.2% |
| 5 May | 50 | 43 | 391 | 11.0% |
| 6 May | 53 | 48 | 374 | 10.3% |
| 7 May | 53 | 53 | 309 | 17.3% |
| 8 May | 71 | 60 | 346 | 17.3% |
| 9 May | 39 | 42 | 416 | 10.1% |
| 10 May | 15 | 28 | 476 | 5.8% |
| 11 May | 49 | 34 | 456 | 7.5% |
| 12 May | 28 | 20 | 435 | 4.6% |
| 13 May | 33 | 36 | 436 | 8.3% |
| 14 May | 39 | 37 | 435 | 18.5% |
| 15 May | 42 | 42 | 374 | 11.2% |
| 16 May | 18 | 18 | 368 | 4.9% |
| TOTAL | 1694 | 1280 | 9152 | 14.0% |

SOURCE: COMBAT OPS LOG

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TONNAGES DROPPED

PERCENTAGE
BIRMINGHAM TO
ALL VIETNAM

ALL VIETNAM
TONS DROPPED
USAF AND VNAF

BIRMINGHAM
TONS DROPPED

| | | | |
|--------|-------|------|-------|
| 24 Apr | 59 | 259 | 22.8% |
| 25 Apr | 56 | 174 | 32.2% |
| 26 Apr | 67* | 217 | 32.4% |
| 27 Apr | 77 | 281 | 27.3% |
| 28 Apr | 85 | 203 | 41.8% |
| 29 Apr | 60 | 205 | 29.2% |
| 30 Apr | 86 | 208 | 24.2% |
| 1 May | 81* | 178 | 45.5% |
| 2 May | 71** | 136 | 52.5% |
| 3 May | 52** | 157 | 33.1% |
| 4 May | 52* | 161 | 19.9% |
| 5 May | 38** | 148 | 25.7% |
| 6 May | 30** | 134 | 37.8% |
| 7 May | 36* | 103 | 34.9% |
| 8 May | 35* | 138 | 25.3% |
| 9 May | 37*** | 110 | 33.7% |
| 10 May | 20*** | 133 | 22.6% |
| 11 May | 22 | 139 | 15.8% |
| 12 May | 16 | 146 | 11.0% |
| 13 May | 16 | 132 | 12.1% |
| 14 May | 29 | 110 | 26.4% |
| 15 May | 26 | 103 | 25.2% |
| 16 May | 9 | 120 | 7.5% |
| TOTAL | 1040 | 3695 | 28.2% |

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* PLUS 315 TONS, B-52 ORDNANCE EACH DAY

** PLUS 252 TONS, B-52 ORDNANCE EACH DAY

***PLUS 112 TONS, B-52 CBU

SOURCE: MISSION REPORTS (TACC-CR)

BIRMINGHAM

| | <u>STRUCT DEST</u> | <u>SAMP DEST</u> | <u>SEC EXPL</u> | <u>STRUCT DEST</u> | <u>SAMP DEST</u> | <u>SEC EXPL</u> |
|--------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 24 APR | 1 | 0 | 0 | 467 | 22 | 27 |
| 25 APR | 0 | 1 | 0 | 293 | 18 | 4 |
| 26 APR | 12 | 0 | 1* | 224 | 34 | 4 |
| 27 APR | 17 | 0 | 8 | 349 | 8 | 30 |
| 28 APR | 1 | 0 | 2 | 568 | 21 | 10 |
| 29 APR | 0 | 0 | 1 | 243 | 9 | 18 |
| 30 APR | 4 | 0 | 0 | 247 | 9 | 7 |
| 1 MAY | 2 | 0 | 0 | 169 | 4 | 3 |
| 2 MAY | 137 | 0 | 3 | 378 | 2 | 8 |
| 3 MAY | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 2 | 2 |
| 4 MAY | 15 | 0 | 0 | 205 | 5 | 3 |
| 5 MAY | 4 | 0 | 1 | 230 | 2 | 9 |
| 6 MAY | 0 | 0 | 1 | 286 | 2 | 6 |
| 7 MAY | 0 | 0 | 0 | 121 | 6 | 4 |
| 8 MAY | 0 | 0 | 0 | 104 | 3 | 3 |
| 9 MAY | 0 | 0 | 0** | 285 | 0 | 5 |
| 10 MAY | 2 | 0 | 0 | 258 | 4 | 0 |
| 11 MAY | 1 | 0 | 0 | 228 | 6 | 2 |
| 12 MAY | 2 | 0 | 0 | 230 | 2 | 1 |
| 13 MAY | 0 | 0 | 0 | 186 | 19 | 2 |
| 14 MAY | 3 | 0 | 0 | 134 | 4 | 4 |
| 15 MAY | 6 | 0 | 0 | 151 | 2 | 6 |
| 16 MAY | 0 | 0 | 0 | 268 | 12 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 207 | 1 | 17 | 5874 | 196 | 163 |

(5 KBA EST)
(1 KBA CONF)

* POL AREA

** FAC ESTIMATE 150 KBA

SOURCE: INTELLIGENCE (C TEAM)

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| | NBR REQUESTED | | SORTIES | | SORTIES FLOWN | | FLARESHIPS | | FLARES | | B-52 |
|---------|---------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------|----------|--------|--------------|-------------|
| | PRE-PLANNED | IMMEDIATE | PRE-PLANNED | IMMEDIATE | PRE-PLANNED | IMMEDIATE | FLOWN | EXPENDED | ROUND | SORTIES/TONS | |
| 24 Apr | 90 | 15 | 45 | 15 | 59 | 1 | 2/0 | 15/315 | | | |
| 25 Apr | 42 | 4 | 42 | 4 | 56 | 1 | 54/5200 | | | | |
| 26 Apr | 75 | 17 | 39 | 17 | 67 | 1 | 71/0 | 15/315 | | | |
| 27 Apr | 267 | 17 | 51 | 17 | 77 | 1 | 36/4500 | | | | |
| 28 Apr | 111 | 8 | 102 | 8 | 85 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| 29 Apr | 96 | 22 | 71 | 22 | 60 | 1 | 61/0 | | | | |
| 30 Apr | 96 | 19 | 77 | 20 | 86 | 1 | 64/0 | | | | |
| 1 May | 135 | 2 | 118 | 2 | 81 | 1 | 96/00 | | | | |
| 2 May | 87 | 6 | 72 | 6 | 71 | 0 | 0 | | | | 15/315 |
| 3 May | 54 | 3 | 54 | 3 | 52 | 0 | 0 | | | | 12/252 |
| 4 May | 36 | 2 | 32 | 2 | 32 | 0 | 0 | | | | 12/252 |
| 5 May | 48 | 2 | 41 | 2 | 38 | 0 | 0 | | | | 15/315 |
| 6 May | 51 | 2 | 46 | 2 | 30 | 0 | 0 | | | | 12/252 |
| 7 May | 51 | 2 | 51 | 2 | 36 | 0 | 0 | | | | 12/252 |
| 8 May | 69 | 2 | 58 | 2 | 35 | 0 | 0 | | | | 15/315 |
| 9 May | 27 | 12 | 30 | 12 | 37 | 0 | 0 | | | | 12/108 (CB) |
| 10 May | 15 | 0 | 28 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | | | | 12/112 (CB) |
| 11 May | 49 | 0 | 34 | 0 | 22 | 0 | 0 | | | | 0/0 |
| 12 May | 26 | 2 | 18 | 2 | 16 | 0 | 0 | | | | 0/0 |
| 13 May | 18 | 15 | 21 | 15 | 16 | 0 | 0 | | | | 0/0 |
| 14 May | 30 | 9 | 28 | 9 | 29 | 0 | 0 | | | | 0/0 |
| 15 May | 18 | 24 | 18 | 24 | 26 | 0 | 0 | | | | 0/0 |
| 16 May | 18 | 0 | 18 | 0 | 9* | 0 | 0 | | | | 0/0 |
| TOTAL | 1509 | 185 | 1094 | 186 | 1040 | 7 | 384/9700 | 162/3118 | | | |
| AVERAGE | 65.6 | 8.1 | 47.7 | 8.1 | 45.3 | | | | | | |

SOURCE: STRIKE PLANS, COMBAT OPS LOG, MISSION REPORTS

* ESTIMATED- 12 VNAF SORTIES - ORD NOT AVAIL
1 FLT F-100'S, 1 FLT VNAF A-1H DID NOT EXPEND - NO TGT

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OPERATION BIRMINGHAM

Footnotes

(References as noted provided in one copy to AFCHP and in DOPEC file copy.)

- 1/ (C) Operations Order 8-66, Hq 1st Inf Div, 19 Apr 66 (Doc #1).
- 2/ Ibid.
- 3/ (C) Msg, 1st Inf Div to 7AF, AVID 2/63, 1 May 66 (Doc #2).
- 4/ (C) Operations Order 8-66, Hq 1st Inf Div, 19 Apr 66 (Doc #1).
- 5/ (C) Msg, MACV to CINCPAC, OPREP-5, Ground Ops 027, 271600ZApr66 (Doc #3).
- 6/ (C) Combat Air Activity Rept, 7AF, 270600H-280600HApr66 (Doc #4).
- 7/ (C) III DASC to 7AF, ISUM, 281315ZApr66 (Doc #5).
- 8/ (C) 7AF TACC Memo, Air Support-Operation Birmingham, 17May66 (Doc #6).
- 9/ (C) MACV Ground Force Sitrep, 291601Z to 301600ZApr66 (Doc #3).
- 10/ (C) USMACV Daily Sitrep, 291601Z to 301600ZApr66 (Doc #7).
- 11/ (C) 7AF TACC Memo, Air Support-Operation Birmingham, 17May66 (Doc #6).
- 12/ (C) Operations Order 8-66, Hq 1st Inf Div, 19 Apr 66 (Doc #1).
- 13/ (C) 7AF TACC Memo, Air Support-Operation Birmingham, 17May66 (Doc #6).
- 14/ (C) USMACV Daily Sitrep 132-66, 111601Z to 121600ZMay66 (Doc #7).
- 15/ (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, DO 07463, U-55 Rept, 23May66 (Doc #8).
- 16/ Ibid.
- 17/ (S) Msg, MACV to DIA, MACJ 236-1, 221047ZApr66 (Doc #9).
- 18/ (C) MACV to DIA, MACJ 236-1, 122331ZApr66 (Doc #10).
- 19/ (S) Msg, MACV to DIA, MACJ 236-1, 041023ZMay66 (Doc #11).
- 20/ Ibid.

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21/ (U) After Action Report, ALO, ARVN Airborne Div, Operation An Dan 79/66, prepared by LtCol Eugene R. McCutchan, ALO Airborne Div, May 66 (Doc #12).

22/ (C) Msg, 1st Inf Div to 7AF, AVOID 2/63, 1 May 66 (Doc #2).